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Chief Peter Sloly remarks during Media availability - January 31, 2022

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(Ottawa)—Good afternoon. I want to thank the Mayor and the Chair for their comments that preceded mine.

I want to provide you with an update since the last media session we held on Friday, before the commencement of the core of the demonstrations that arrived in the nation's capital.

At that last media briefing, you will recall that we described this as a unique demonstration. You heard some of those elements from chair Deans and Mayor Watson.

For those of you who live in Ottawa's downtown core, you have seen that materialize over the last four days.

Our frontline officers and civilian members or partners from national, provincial and municipal agencies have experienced the same thing.

This demonstration is unique in nature, massive in scale, polarizing in context and dangerous in literally every other aspect of the event itself.

This started on the West Coast of Canada and spread across the country. It has been fluid, ever-changing and increasingly more difficult to manage. That has remained since the beginning; it continues to this current day.

I want to provide you with the updated information, from the course of events that took place through Friday afternoon into Saturday, Saturday evening into Sunday, Sunday evening into Monday.

As we talked about on Friday, the ingress of thousands of vehicles, particularly heavy trucks, caused almost immediate traffic gridlock through Friday into traffic chaos on Saturday and Sunday.

As we told you on Friday, the ingress level of vehicles and demonstrators would make large areas of the downtown core as well as the access routes in and out of the city, bridges, 400-series highways, and major thoroughfares difficult to navigate for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists of any kind.

It would create situations, pockets of dangerous areas for people to travel through.

It will require our residents and our businesses to get updated information from ourselves or city partners and other agencies around the current state of issues and risks and make informed decisions for the safety of themselves, their families and their businesses.

For the most part, the people who have been directly affected have been incredibly patient, incredibly resilient, and they have suffered a lot. I would like to recognize those people who live, work or need to commute through the downtown core of Ottawa. They've been incredibly and negatively impacted by the course of demonstrations and the impact of those demonstrations on their lives and livelihoods.

We are incredibly concerned about the stress they've been under, not just in the last several days but in the last months and years of the pandemic. We're very much aware of this. We're doing everything possible to mitigate those impacts against individuals, families, and businesses.

At the same time, I need to let everyone know of the incredible level of bravery, compassion, professionalism and dedication of all Ottawa Police Service members, all of the partner agencies that have joined us here in the last four days, all of our partners at the City of Ottawa and anyone who's played any direct role in supporting the operations around this demonstration. They have been an incredible group of individuals who kept this city safe during a situation that could have become riotous, it could have led to significant and severe injuries, and it could have led to the loss of lives.

None of that has occurred over the last four days. Let me repeat.

No injuries, no deaths, no riots in the last four days in the nation's capital, even though we have a global cause, national protest.

Tens of thousands of individuals from a wide variety of causes gathered to actively demonstrate 24 hours a day for the last four days. All of that, coupled with

thousands of heavy trucks, SUVs and cars driving into the city and congregating in the core of this city, 24 hours a day for four days a week.

I want to specifically thank the following agencies who have come from the federal, provincial and municipal levels: The RCMP, Ontario Provincial Police, Gatineau Police, le Sûreté du Québec, London Police Services, Hamilton Police Services, Peel Region Police Services, Toronto Police Services, York Region Police Services and Durham Region Police Services.

They have sent members of their organization with experience and expertise, professionalism, compassion and joined under our Incident Command System. They have provided very needed, timely, professional, and effective services to keep this city safe. To keep our community safe. To keep our residents safe. To keep our city workers safe. To maintain emergency routes for fire, ambulance and police. To ensure the safety of our health care centers, hospitals or vaccination clinics. To ensure as much as possible the continuation of business within the city and the lifeblood of the city in terms of our ability for our residents to receive emergency services.

There were reports of denial of service—injuries and trauma-related directly to the demonstration. I can tell you that is not true. We have verification from ambulance services, fire services and police services that while they were delays in responses and, in some instances, gaps in services delivery, nobody was directly affected regarding ambulatory service requirements or emergency services requirements. Despite the massive traffic chaos and gridlock that we saw, not just in the core but on our major access ingress routes in the bridges to 400 series highways, that is an incredible level of coordination and professionalism that was demonstrated over the last four days.

Going forward, I want to be clear: public safety remains our paramount priority. The safety of our residents, our businesses, our visitors, our partners, our service members and yes, the safety of all those who have chosen to come here to demonstrate whether they live in the city or they've come from other locations across the country.

Effective tomorrow, we are re-deploying our Market Neighborhood Resource Teams, our Centretown Neighborhood Resource Teams, and our crime prevention officers back into their neighbourhoods, the Market, Lowertown, Sandy Hill, and into Centretown. Their jobs will be to provide direct support services, safety services, and customer service to the residents, business owners, the not-for-profit sector, and the service providers in and around the core. Unfortunately, we needed those officers over the last four days. Every single one of those officers was deployed fully and continually. They are tired, they're stressed, and they're strained, but every one of them knows the stress and strain that was imposed upon their communities, and they're going back to serve and protect those communities effective tomorrow.

The situation of the demonstration has scaled down over the last 12 hours. Let me repeat - the situation of the demonstration has scaled down over the last 12 hours.

We want that trend to continue until this demonstration comes to a complete end. I cannot guarantee you that right now. Still, I can guarantee you that every effort that negotiation and coordination, de-escalation has continued throughout the last four days and will continue until the complete end of this demonstration.

We will maintain a large contingent of our neighbourhood and crime prevention officers in the immediate communities around where the core demonstrations are taking place to provide greater services, a greater sense of safety and greater interactions with those who've been most affected.

Within the next 24 hours, we will be creating a hotline for hate incidents hate crimes. Any offence directly related to the demonstrations, including criminal offences, threats, assaults, hate-related crimes and mischiefs. Anything that any member of the Community, visitor and demonstrator has faced in terms of criminal activity, a hotline will be established to receive those reports. There will be an immediate and continuous investigation until we have resolved it through charge and prosecution.

We have continued our relationship and working relationship with the Crowns Office. We have intelligence officers, investigative officers, and multi-jurisdictional support from British Columbia to Saint John's. From Nunavut to the GTA. To make sure that no matter where you live, no matter where your vehicles are registered, if you've come here and committed a crime. If you have committed a hate crime, you will be investigated. We will look for you. We will charge you, if necessary, will arrest you, and we will pursue prosecutions against you.

We have several active criminal investigations undergoing from bribery to threats to assault to the dangerous operation of vehicles. They will continue. Please report to us any other matters that we are not aware of.

We've had meetings throughout the last 24 hours. I had calls with the mayor, the chair, council members who represent the wards in the immediate area of the demonstration sites. We have had meetings with the City Councillor, City Legal. Today, I've had direct meetings with Commissioner Brenda Lucki, Commissioner Tom Carrique of the Ontario Provincial Police, their executive staff, and operational leads in the National Capital Region. We have continued to request levels of resources and support from our partner agencies federally, provincially and municipally. They have all been generous in providing those resource requests. They are continuing to support us as we go forward.

We continue negotiations with the core organizers of the core protests. We are emphatic in our desire to resolve these demonstrations as quickly, safely and effectively as possible. That will continue until the very end.

All options. All options are on the table. Through negotiation, through to enforcement. All options remain on the table to safely and effectively resolve this demonstration.

We will work in full coordination with the City of Ottawa. My thanks to Steve Kanellakos and his amazing team. You're going to hear from Kim Ayotte yet very shortly.

As we have done from the first day, we're going to work in full cooperation with our federal, provincial and municipal policing partners, national security agencies, and other public sector agencies. We will do so to the last day.

Let me repeat. Public safety has been paramount from the very beginning of this operation. We have had four dangerous, difficult dynamic days of 24 hours a day operations in frigid temperatures, minus 25 - 30 degrees. Our officers work 12/14/18 hour days in the cold with extremely dangerous and dynamic situations.

There were 1000 potential flashpoints that could have resulted in rioting, injury, or death. They did not occur. We kept this city safe. We kept our community safe. We kept our partners safe. We kept our members safe.

I'm indebted to the professionalism and the duty to serve and protect of our members of the Ottawa Police Services and the partner agencies. I'm indebted to the resilience of our residents, our business owners, our visitors, our employers, our employees.

This has been a whole of service effort. It's been a whole of city effort and, to a degree, a whole of country efforts. So far, we've been successful. We take nothing for granted. We are making progress. Real progress. We've reduced the size of the demonstration significantly will continue to do so in the hours and days ahead.

Your patience is necessary; your support is appreciated. Your resilience is amazing.

I thank you very much. My team is here to answer any questions. Deputy Chief Bell from an investigations Intelligence standpoint, Deputy Chief Ferguson from an operational standpoint, I will remain until all questions are asked. We'll provide the best and most up-to-date information for you and the media.

I thank Mayor Watson, chair Deans, and Council for your support. Steve Kanellakos and the team at the City of Ottawa for their support. I will turn things back over to the moderator now. Thank you.

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To view the full City of Ottawa and Ottawa Police virtual Media briefing from this afternoon, please visit the City's YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XISC52lOjo>

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